

AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS

Nine sheets of replacement drawings are attached to this response. The replacement drawings replace all original drawings. All hand-drawn figures are replaced by machine generated drawings and all other figures have been modified to increase clarity. A summary of the changes to the drawings is as follows:

- Figure 1. Shading removed for better clarity.
- Figure 2. Shading replaced with line hatching for greater clarity.
- Figure 3. Shading replaced with line hatching for greater clarity.
- Figure 4. Shading replaced with line hatching for greater clarity.
- Figure 5. Shading removed for greater clarity.
- Figure 6. Shading replaced with line hatching for greater clarity.
- Figure 7. Hand-drawing replaced with computer generated drawing.
- Figure 8. Hand-drawing replaced with computer generated drawing.
- Figure 9. Hand-drawing replaced with computer generated drawing. Spring 46 drawn with greater clarity.
- Figure 10. Hand-drawing replaced with computer generated drawing.
- Figure 11. Hand-drawing replaced with computer generated drawing.

Replacement sheets one through nine replace the original drawing sheets.

Attachment: Replacement Drawing Sheets one through nine.

REMARKS

Reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested in view of the foregoing discussion presented herein.

Amendment to the Specification

Applicants amend a paragraph of the written description to correct an obvious typographical error.

Objection to Drawings

Although no indication was made as to whether the drawings were accepted or objected to by the Examiner, the applicants have attached replacement drawing sheets and requests that the attached sheets be accepted as replacements for the original drawings. The replacement figures replace hand-drawn figures with machine generated figures and replace shading with lines and cross-hatching for greater clarity. The applicants request that the Examiner accept the replacement drawings.

Claim Rejections

Status of Claims

Upon entry of the foregoing amendments, claims 11, 29 – 34, 40 – 43, 45 – 49 (16 claims total, 4 independent claims) remain pending in this application. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of the pending claims 29 – 33, 40 – 43, 45 – 49 in view of the following remarks.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

In the Office Action, claims 29 and 40 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Ferrara et al. In particular, the Examiner asserts that Ferrara shows a hopper 12, marker 11, and a coupler for coupling the hopper to the marker, the coupler including a feed neck 23 connected to the hopper, and a marker mount 14 connected to the marker; the feed neck and marker mount being releasably coupled.

Ferrara does not teach each and every element of amended claims 29 and 40. Ferrara teaches away from at least a feed neck that separates from a marker mount.

Ferrara teaches a feed neck 23 that is held within the marker mount 14 by nut 20, Ferrara Figure 2; col. 4, l. 16 – 20; col. 4, l. 32 – 34, a feed neck 23 that is connected to nut 20, Ferrara col. 3, l. 48 – 51, and a feed neck 23 that is an integral part of the marker mount 14, Ferrara Figure 5; col. 5, l. 32 – 34. Ferrara teaches away from at least “said feed neck decouples and separates from said marker mount.” See Ferrara col. 4, l. 52 – 55. In one embodiment, Ferrara describes putting a nut 20 and compression member 40 on hopper 12 *during assembly*, but when decoupled, *Ferrara leaves the decoupling part out*, the pressure against the hopper tube 29 is released, and the hopper 12 exits the feed neck 40 and nut 20, and leaves the feed neck 40 inside the marker mount that is connected to the marker. See Ferrara Figure 6; col. 5, l. 55 – 65. Ferrara does not teach a releasable coupler where “said feed neck decouples and separates from said marker mount.” The feed neck, as taught by Ferrara, may be separate from the marker mount 14 during assembly, but the feed neck does not separate from the marker mount during use as a quick coupler.

In order to advance the application, Applicants amended claims 29 to clarify that “said feed neck engages and releasably couples to said marker mount” and “said feed neck decouples and separates from said marker mount.” Claim 40 clarifies that the feed neck slidably inserts into and releaseably couples to the marker mount and the feed neck decouples and slidably exits the marker mount. Accordingly, Ferrara does not teach each and every element of amended claims 29 and 40, thus Applicants respectfully request the withdrawal of the § 102(e) rejection of amended claims 29 and 40.

Additionally, claims 29 and 40 depended on rejected independent claims 11 and 34 respectively. Applicants have rewritten claims 29 and 40 in independent form to incorporate the limitations of their respective independent claims.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

In the Office Action, claims 41 and 45 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ferrara in view of Lightburne. In particular, the Examiner asserts that Ferrara shows a feed neck coupled to a marker mount by means of

threads, but Lightburn shows a coupling that can be quickly connected and disconnected using a pin and a groove.

Dependent claims 41 and 45 depend from amended claims 40 and 29 respectively, so dependent claims 41 and 45 are allowable for at least the reasons discussed above with respect to amended claims 40 and 29, as well as in view of its own respective features. Furthermore, as set forth above, Ferrara teaches away from at least “said feed neck decouples and separates from said marker mount” as recited by amended claim 29 and “said feed neck decouples and slidably exits said marker mount” as recited by amended claim 40. Lightburne, on the other hand, teaches coupling two pipes where a portion of the coupler attaches to one pipe, portion C in Lightburne Figure 1, another portion connects to the other pipe, portion H in Lightburne Figure 1, and coupling occurs between the coupler portions. When decoupled, each portion of the coupler remains connected to their respective pipes. Neither reference provides a motivation to combine, thus, it is not obvious to combine Ferrara with Lightburne.

Objections to Claims 30 – 33 and 42 – 43

In the Office Action, claims 30 – 33 and 42 – 43 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Dependent claims 30 – 33 and 42 – 43 depend from amended claims 29 and 40, so dependent claims 30 – 33 and 42 – 43 are allowable for at least the reasons discussed above with respect to amended claims 29 and 40, as well as in view of their own respective features.

New Claims 46 - 49

New claims 46 – 49 depend from amended claim 29, so new claims 46 – 49 are allowable for at least the reasons discussed above with respect to amended claim 29, as well as in view of their own respective features.

Amendments Made Without Prejudice or Estoppel.

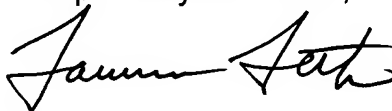
Notwithstanding the amendments made and the accompanying traversing remarks provided above, these amendments have been made without any prejudice, waiver, or estoppel, and without forfeiture or dedication to the public, with respect to the original subject matter of the claims as originally filed or in their form immediately preceding these amendments.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that all of the pending claims are allowable over the prior art of record. Reconsideration of the application and allowance of all pending claims is earnestly requested. Should the Examiner wish to discuss any of the above in greater detail or deem that amendments should be made to improve the form of the claims, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the Examiner's convenience.

Date: 11/22/2005

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lawrence Letham", written in a cursive style.

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Attachment: Replacement Drawing Sheets